Alberta

Demographic Spotlight

August 2011

The Visible Minority Population: Recent Trends in Alberta and Canada

Highlights

- The visible minority population has increased significantly over the past few decades, in both Alberta and Canada.
- Between 1996 and 2006, Alberta's visible minority population increased three times faster than the overall population growth. As a result, the share of visible minorities in the province's total population increased from 10% to almost 14%.[1]
- Among provinces, Alberta had the third largest population share of visible minorities in all three censuses. British Columbia and Ontario had the first and second highest proportions.
- In Canada, South Asian minorities (25% of total minority population) overtook the Chinese (24%) to become the largest minority group in 2006. In Alberta, the Chinese remained the largest (26%) even though its share had declined since 1996.
- In Alberta, 91% of the visible minorities lived in the two largest cities. Calgary had the highest proportion of visible minorities followed by Edmonton.

The Visible Minorities

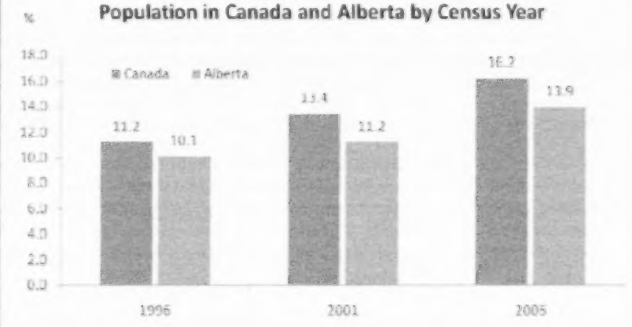
Visible minorities are defined by the Employment Equity Act as 'persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.' The question to allow people to self-identify as a visible minority was first introduced in the 1996 Census. It included the following groups: Chinese, South Asian, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Arab, West Asian, Korean, Japanese, visible minority n.i.e. ('not included elsewhere'), multiple visible minority, and not a visible minority.[2]

Since the 1970s, when Canada revised its immigration act to eliminate racial discrimination and to allow more intakes from Asia and Africa, the visible minority population has increased rapidly. Now, Canada is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. This report will examine how visible minorities have become a strong population growth driver in Canada and Alberta and how their compositions changed between the 1996 and 2006 Censuses.

Overall Growth of Visible Minorities

In 1996, the population of visible minorities in Canada jumped from 3,197,480 in 1996 to 5,068,090 in 2006, a 58.5% increase. That was almost six times higher than the 10.0% overall population growth during the same period. As a result, the population share of the visible minorities increased from 11.2% in 1996 to 16.2% in 2006 (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1. Visible Minorities as a Percentage of Total Population in Canada and Alberta by Census Year



Source: Statistics Canada, Census 1996, 2001 and 2006

[1] All sources are from Census 1996, 2001 and 2006 unless otherwise indicated.

[2] Definitions provided by Census 2006, South Asians are East Indian Pakistani, Ski Lankan, etc. Southeast Asian examples include Cambodia, Malaysian, Laotian, and Vietnamese. West Asian examples are Iranian and Afghan. Other visible minority or n.i.e. (not included elsewhere) write-in responses include Pacific Islander, Guyanese, Kurd, etc. Multiple responses include those with more than one minority group identified. Not a visible minority includes respondents who reported 'Yes' to the Aboriginal identity question as well as respondents who were not considered to be members of a visible minority group.

Prepared by Demography Unit
For more information, please contact Sheena Francisco (780) 427-7391

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In Alberta, the story was similar. In actual levels, the province's visible minorities population increased by 68.7% from about 269,300 in 1996 to 454,200 in 2006, a rate faster than the provincial population growth of 22.0% in the same period. In terms of population share, one in ten Albertans was a visible minority in 1996 and by 2006 it increased to one in seven.

Among all provinces in 1996, 8.4% of the visible minorities in the country lived in Alberta, the fourth highest share among provinces (**Table 1**). Ontario had the highest share (52.6%), followed by British Columbia (20.7%) and Quebec (13.6%). This ranking remained the same until 2006. However, Ontario and Alberta's shares increased to 54.2% and 9.0%, respectively, while British Columbia and Quebec's shares declined to 19.9% and 12.9%.

Table 1. Visible Minorities Distribution across Canada

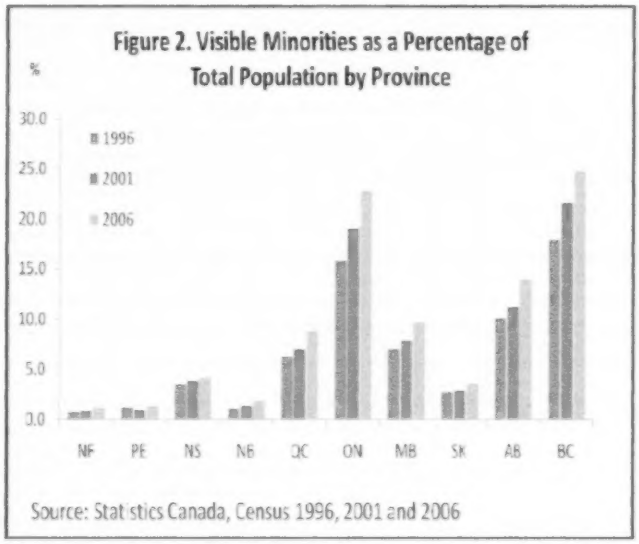
	Share of total visible minority population (%)		
	1996	2001	2006
CA	100	100	100
NF	0.1	0.1	0.1
PE	0.0	0.0	0.0
NS	1.0	0.9	0.7
NB	0.3	0.2	0.3
QC	13.6	12.5	12.9
ON	52.6	54.0	54.2
MB	2.4	2.2	2.2
SK	0.8	0.7	0.7
AB	8.4	8.3	9.0
BC	20.7	21.0	19.9

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 1996, 2001 and 2006
May not add due to rounding

In terms of visible minorities' proportion of the total population, British Columbia had the largest share in all three censuses as shown in **Figure 2**. Ontario was second and Alberta placed third. In 2006, almost a quarter of British Columbia's population belonged to a visible minority group, while Ontario and Alberta had a share of 22.8% and 13.9%, respectively. All of the Maritime Provinces, as well as Saskatchewan, reported less than 5% visible minority population share. From 1996 to 2006, the population share of visible minorities increased in all provinces except for Prince Edward Island where it declined in 2001 and rose again in 2006.

The increasing population share of visible minorities in Canada was partly due to the large influx of immigrants in recent years, particularly those from Asia and Africa. In 2006, 254,374 immigrants moved to Canada, a 17.0% increase from 1996 and much higher than the overall population growth of 10.0%. During the same period, immigrants to Alberta jumped 44% from about 14,000 in 1996 to over 20,000 in 2006 while the provincial population growth was 23%. Between 1996 and 2006, immigrants coming from Asian and African countries to Canada increased by 11% from approximately 161,500 to over 178,500 while those from Caucasian-dominated countries (i.e. Europe) declined by 5% from 40,000 to 38,000.[3]

As inflow of immigrants continues to increase yearly after 2006, we expect the population share of visible minorities to rise further, particularly for Canada. Between 2006 and 2010, about two thirds of Canada's total population increase, or one million people, was due to immigration. Given that a majority of these immigrants were from Asian and African countries, it is very likely that the population share of visible minorities in Canada will continue to increase. However, the expected trend in Alberta is less definite. Although the number of immigrants grew faster than the overall population, immigration only accounted for 30% of Alberta's total population growth (net interprovincial migration was another big contributor to Alberta's population growth). Therefore, it is uncertain whether the share of visible minorities in Alberta will rise or fall. These changes will be confirmed when Statistics Canada releases the data on Census 2011 over the next few years.



[3] CIC Facts and Figures 2005, 2008, and 2009

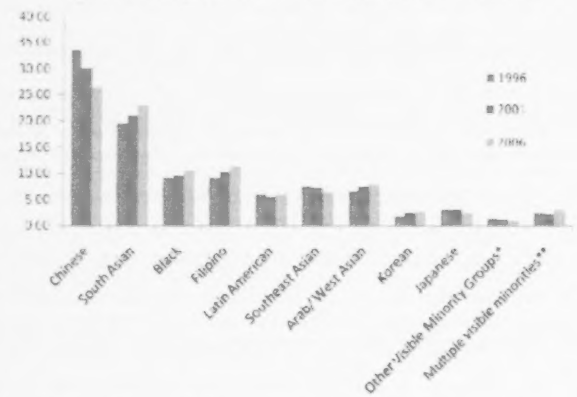
Trends for Specific Visible Minority Groups

According to Census 1996, Chinese was the largest minority group in Canada, accounting for 26.9% of the country's total visible minority population and 3.0% of the total population **(Appendix 1).** South Asian (21.0%) was the second largest group, while Black (17.9%) was the third. By 2006, the rankings changed slightly as South Asian surpassed the Chinese to become the biggest group. South Asians comprised 24.9% of the visible minorities, or 4.0% of Canada's population compared to Chinese's 24.0% and 3.9%, respectively. The Black population remained the third largest but their proportion declined from 17.9% to 15.5% within 10 years. Overall, in 2006, almost 74.5% of the visible minorities could trace their roots to Asia, 15.5% were Blacks and 6.0% were Latin Americans. Multiple visible minorities increased from 1.9% in 1996 to 2.6% in 2006. Other visible minorities, on the other hand, declined from 2.2% to 1.4%.

In Alberta, the Chinese were the largest minority group in all three censuses (see **Figure 3**). However, their share in the province declined between 1996 and 2006. In 1996, their share was 33.6% of all visible minorities living in Alberta, then it went down to 30.0% in 2001 and to 26.5% in 2006. Despite being the largest minority group, Alberta's Chinese population only accounted for 9.9% of the total Chinese population in Canada (third place in the country). The other groups that showed a decline in population share in Alberta between 1996 and 2006 were the Southeast Asians, Japanese and other visible minority groups. Increases were observed for the other groups, with the greatest increases belonging to Koreans, Filipinos and multiple visible minorities. After the Chinese, the South Asians were the second largest group, while Filipinos surpassed the Black to become the third largest group in 2006.

Looking closely at the presence of each group, we observed strong concentrations of visible minority groups in certain provinces. Ontario was the most popular location for all visible minority groups except for the Japanese, who mostly chose British Columbia as their home province in all three censuses **(Appendix 2)**. The second preference, however, were quite different among the groups. British Columbia had the second largest shares of South Asians, Filipinos, Koreans and multiple visible minorities in the country, while Blacks, Latin Americans, Southeast Asians, Arab/West Asians and other visible minority groups chose Quebec as their second most preferred province to live in. Alberta ranked third for most of the groups.

Figure 3. Composition of Visible Minorities in Alberta



Source: Statistics Canada, Census 1996, 2001 and 2006

Visible Minorities in Selected CMAs and CAs

Out of the 144 Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA) and Census Agglomerations (CA) in Canada in 2006, the six largest CMAs were Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Calgary, Ottawa-Gatineau and Edmonton (**Table 2**). In Toronto, 43% of its total population reported that they belonged to a visible minority group, 32% of which were South Asians and 22% were Chinese. Vancouver followed Toronto with 42% of the population reported to be visible minorities and Calgary with 22%. In Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton, Chinese was the biggest visible minority group, while there were more Blacks in Montreal and Ottawa-Gatineau. In these metropolitan areas, South Asians and West Asians experienced the greatest population share increases between 1996 and 2006, while the Chinese, Blacks and Arabs had observed a decline.

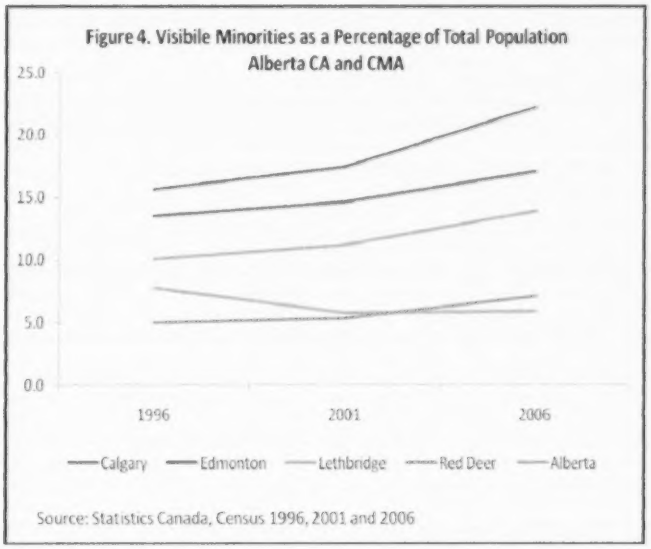
In Alberta, two CMAs and two CAs were consistently included in the census study, namely, Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge and Red Deer. As seen in **Figure 4**, the total population share of visible minorities in these four regions increased from 1996 to 2006 except for Lethbridge which declined from 7.8% to 6.0%. Calgary and Edmonton had the highest proportion of visible minorities in their populations. Furthermore, 91.0% of Alberta's visible minorities lived in these two urban centers in 2006, up from 90.2% in 1996.

Table 2. Composition of Visible Minorities by CMA Population (in %)

Census 2006	Toronto	Vancouver	Montréal	Calgary	Ottawa / Gatineau	Edmonton
Total Visible Minority as a Percentage of CMA Population						
	42.9	41.7	16.5	22.2	16.0	17.1
Composition of Visible Minorities by CMA						
Chinese	22.4	43.6	12.2	27.9	18.1	26.9
South Asian	31.5	23.7	12.0	24.3	15.1	22.9
Black	16.2	2.4	28.6	8.9	25.1	11.6
Filipino	7.9	9.0	4.0	10.7	4.1	11.2
Latin American	4.6	2.6	12.8	5.6	5.9	5.3
Southeast Asian	3.2	3.8	7.6	6.6	6.5	6.3
Arab	2.5	0.8	16.7	4.9	15.7	6.8
West Asian	3.5	3.2	2.5	2.5	3.6	1.7
Korean	2.5	5.1	0.8	2.9	1.3	2.1
Japanese	0.9	2.9	0.5	2.0	1.0	1.3
Other minority groups	2.1	0.3	0.6	0.8	1.0	0.8
Multiple visible minority	2.8	2.5	1.7	2.9	2.5	3.0
Total visible minorities	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2006

Among all visible minority groups, the Chinese were the largest minority group in all four Alberta metropolitan areas mentiond above, but their share declined between 1996 and 2006. The South Asians were the second biggest group and their share increased during that 10-year period. The Blacks and the Filipinos were alternating in third and fourth place.



Conclusion

The visible minority population has increased significantly over the past few decades. As immigration levels continue to increase, the presence of visible minorities in Canada and Alberta is expected to rise further. By 2031, Statistics Canada projects that close to 30% of the Canadian population and 25% of Alberta's population could be a member of the visible minority group.[4] Therefore, policies and issues relating to these groups (for example, ensuring their successful integration into the labour force) will assume increasing importance in the coming years.

[4] Projections of the Diversity of the Canadian Population 2006 to 2031, Statistics Canada

Appendix 1. Composition of Visible Minorities by Province

1996	CA	NF	PE	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC
Chinese	26.9	35.0	22.6	10.2	22.8	11.6	23.3	15.9	32.8	33.6	45.4
South Asian	21.0	24.2	9.2	10.5	15.3	11.0	23.2	15.7	14.1	19.5	24.0
Black	17.9	15.6	17.4	57.8	39.0	30.4	21.2	13.9	15.8	9.3	3.5
Filipino	7.3	7.3	2.6	2.0	3.1	3.4	7.0	33.5	10.9	9.1	7.1
Latin American	5.5	2.5	1.3	1.0	3.1	11.9	5.1	5.3	5.5	5.9	2.7
Southeast Asian	5.4	4.1	3.0	2.2	4.4	9.7	4.5	5.8	10.8	7.5	3.8
Arab/West Asian	7.7	6.0	30.2	12.0	8.9	18.4	7.1	2.4	4.4	6.6	3.0
Korean	2.0	0.0	3.3	0.9	0.3	0.9	2.1	1.4	1.1	1.7	2.9
Japanese	2.1	1.3	6.2	1.1	0.6	0.7	1.4	2.2	1.6	3.1	4.5
Other Visible Minority Groups	2.2	2.4	0.7	0.8	1.2	0.9	3.1	2.0	0.9	1.3	1.2
Multiple visible minorities	1.9	1.2	3.6	1.4	1.3	1.2	2.1	1.9	2.2	2.4	1.8
Total Visible Minorities	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

2001	CA	NF	PE	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC
Chinese	25.8	24.0	17.3	9.5	16.2	11.4	22.4	13.7	29.3	30.0	43.7
South Asian	23.0	26.2	9.7	8.4	15.0	11.9	25.8	14.8	14.8	21.1	25.1
Black	16.6	21.8	31.2	57.0	40.9	30.6	19.1	14.7	15.1	9.5	3.0
Filipino	7.7	6.9	3.0	1.9	3.8	3.7	7.3	35.0	11.0	10.3	7.7
Latin American	5.4	2.1	6.3	1.5	4.5	12.0	5.0	5.5	7.3	5.7	2.9
Southeast Asian	5.0	3.0	4.2	2.3	3.2	8.9	4.0	6.3	9.4	7.2	4.2
Arab/West Asian	7.6	9.1	16.0	11.6	8.1	17.2	7.2	2.4	5.3	7.4	3.5
Korean	2.5	2.7	1.7	1.7	1.1	0.9	2.5	1.2	2.3	2.4	3.8
Japanese	1.8	1.9	6.8	1.2	1.4	0.6	1.2	1.9	1.6	3.0	3.9
Other Visible Minority Groups	2.5	1.2	2.5	3.4	2.8	1.5	3.7	2.4	1.5	1.3	0.5
Multiple visible minorities	1.9	1.0	1.3	1.5	3.0	1.3	2.0	2.1	2.3	2.1	1.7
Total Visible Minorities	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

2006	CA	NF	PE	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC
Chinese	24.0	23.2	13.7	11.4	18.4	12.2	21.0	12.6	28.1	26.5	40.4
South Asian	24.9	27.8	7.4	10.1	14.7	11.1	28.9	15.2	15.1	22.9	26.0
Black	15.5	15.8	35.3	51.0	33.4	28.7	17.3	14.3	15.0	10.4	2.8
Filipino	8.1	5.3	1.6	1.9	4.0	3.7	7.4	34.6	11.1	11.2	8.7
Latin American	6.0	8.4	11.8	2.5	5.4	13.7	5.4	5.8	7.4	6.0	2.9
Southeast Asian	4.7	2.1	1.6	2.2	3.3	7.7	4.0	5.2	7.5	6.3	4.0
Arab/West Asian	8.3	11.4	16.2	14.0	10.5	19.1	7.6	3.9	8.1	7.9	3.8
Korean	2.8	1.0	4.1	2.1	4.6	0.8	2.5	2.0	2.2	2.7	5.0
Japanese	1.6	2.4	3.6	1.3	1.3	0.5	1.0	1.8	1.9	2.4	3.5
Other Visible Minority Groups	1.4	1.3	3.3	0.7	1.1	0.6	2.1	1.5	1.2	0.8	0.4
Multiple visible minorities	2.6	1.0	1.1	2.7	3.4	1.7	2.8	3.0	2.4	2.9	2.5
Total Visible Minorities	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 1996, 2001 and 2006

Appendix 2. Visible Minorities Distribution Across Canada

1996	CA	NF	PE	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC
Chinese	100	0.2	0.0	0.4	0.2	5.9	45.5	1.4	1.0	10.5	34.9
South Asian	100	0.1	0.0	0.5	0.2	7.1	58.2	1.8	0.6	7.8	23.6
Black	100	0.1	0.0	3.2	0.5	23.0	62.1	1.9	0.7	4.3	4.1
Filipino	100	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.1	6.3	50.1	11.1	1.2	10.4	20.1
Latin American	100	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	29.1	48.5	2.3	0.8	8.9	10.0
Southeast Asian	100	0.1	0.0	0.4	0.2	24.4	43.9	2.6	1.7	11.7	14.7
Arab/West Asian	100	0.1	0.2	1.5	0.3	32.6	48.5	0.8	0.5	7.3	8.2
Korean	100	0.0	0.1	0.5	0.0	6.1	54.6	1.6	0.5	7.3	29.4
Japanese	100	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.1	4.4	35.6	2.4	0.6	12.2	43.8
Other Visible Minority Groups	100	0.1	0.0	0.4	0.1	5.3	74.8	2.2	0.3	5.1	11.6
Multiple visible minorities	100	0.1	0.1	0.7	0.2	8.6	57.1	2.4	1.0	10.5	19.2
2001	CA	NF	PE	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC
Chinese	100	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.1	5.5	46.8	1.2	0.8	9.6	35.5
South Asian	100	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.2	6.5	60.5	1.4	0.4	7.6	22.9
Black	100	0.1	0.1	3.0	0.6	23.0	62.1	1.9	0.6	4.7	3.8
Filipino	100	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	6.0	50.7	9.9	1.0	11.0	20.7
Latin American	100	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	27.4	49.2	2.2	0.9	8.6	11.0
Southeast Asian	100	0.1	0.0	0.4	0.2	22.2	43.4	2.8	1.3	11.9	17.6
Arab/West Asian	100	0.1	0.1	1.3	0.3	28.2	51.2	0.7	0.5	8.1	9.5
Korean	100	0.1	0.0	0.6	0.1	4.4	53.6	1.0	0.6	7.7	31.8
Japanese	100	0.1	0.1	0.6	0.2	3.9	34.0	2.3	0.6	13.6	44.6
Other Visible Minority Groups	100	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.3	7.6	79.8	2.1	0.4	4.3	4.2
Multiple visible minorities	100	0.1	0.0	0.7	0.4	9.1	57.4	2.5	0.9	9.4	19.6
2006	CA	NF	PE	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC
Chinese	100	0.11	0.02	0.35	0.20	6.56	47.43	1.13	0.78	9.89	33.47
South Asian	100	0.13	0.01	0.30	0.16	5.77	62.89	1.31	0.41	8.23	20.77
Black	100	0.12	0.08	2.45	0.57	23.99	60.44	2.00	0.65	6.01	3.61
Filipino	100	0.07	0.01	0.17	0.13	5.89	49.48	9.20	0.92	12.44	21.45
Latin American	100	0.16	0.07	0.31	0.24	29.42	48.36	2.06	0.83	8.96	9.52
Southeast Asian	100	0.05	0.01	0.34	0.18	21.03	45.86	2.36	1.06	11.92	16.96
Arab/West Asian	100	0.15	0.07	1.25	0.33	29.63	49.26	1.01	0.65	8.49	9.10
Korean	100	0.04	0.05	0.56	0.44	3.74	49.01	1.54	0.52	8.49	35.58
Japanese	100	0.17	0.08	0.62	0.21	4.35	34.54	2.47	0.79	13.56	43.12
Other Visible Minority Groups	100	0.11	0.08	0.36	0.21	5.82	79.59	2.36	0.57	5.39	5.43
Multiple visible minorities	100	0.05	0.02	0.77	0.35	8.50	58.14	2.45	0.60	9.95	19.09

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 1996, 2001 and 2006